

Earlier this week, my friend and former Congressional colleague Jim Leach, who currently chairs the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), visited New Jersey to see the impact of the NEH in our state.

The NEH is a relatively small agency, but its influence has proven remarkable. In Princeton, for instance, the public library recently received a \$500,000 Challenge Grant that supported major community-wide events, including the Princeton Reads year-long community reading program, McCarter Live at the Library, Page to Stage, and other popular programs. Library officials explained that they were required to match each dollar of federal funding with three dollars from other sources, dramatically magnifying the effect of NEH funds. Later, during a visit to Rutgers, we heard from numerous faculty members about how the NEH had supported their community outreach and their important research on Thomas Edison, William Penn, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Chairman Leach also has used his prominent role to become a passionate and articulate promoter of civility in our politics and our day-to-day lives, a message he underscored during our visit together to Lore Elementary in Ewing. As he recently wrote:

“Civility is not simply about manners. It doesn't mean that spirited advocacy is to be avoided. What it does require is a willingness to consider respectfully the views of others, with an understanding that we are all connected and rely on one another. Seldom is there only one proper path determinable by one individual or political party. Public decision-making does not lend itself to certitude. Everybody can learn from somebody else. That is why civility is a central ingredient of a democratic society.”

### **Does Big Oil Need More Public Land and Tax Dollars?**

Last week, the Department of the Interior released [a new report](#) showing that nearly two-thirds of the acreage leased by oil and gas companies remain idle, neither producing nor under active exploration or development by companies who hold those leases.

In fact, oil and gas companies are leasing but failing to use an area of public land roughly the

size of New Jersey, New Hampshire, Kentucky, Vermont, and Connecticut combined. Yet Big Oil has the temerity to claim that they need more taxpayer land and more taxpayer subsidies to continue drilling.

### The Next Age of Space Exploration

Many people recently have raised with me questions about NASA's future, especially now that the shuttle era has drawn to a close and the private space launch company SpaceX is [having success](#)

. Even as NASA continues its development of a next-generation spacecraft, the administration is using this pause as an opportunity to consider NASA's future direction. As long as this pause is only temporary, NASA need not lose significantly expertise or momentum. Meanwhile, it is good to see private investment and ideas coming into the space program.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress